

HAFTARAH EXHORTATIONS:

Haftarah Vayera

by Mark Huey posted 15 November, 2008 www.outreachisrael.net

2 Kings 4:1-37

“Hospitality Blessings”

As you ponder this week’s Haftarah reading and contemplate why the ancient Sages attached it to *Vayera* (Genesis 18:1-22:24), the connective reasons appear to be the two common threads of hospitality and the blessings of offspring. In the case of the account of Elisha and the Shunammite woman, and Abraham and the Divine messengers, there is every indication that both were inherently hospitable without any hidden motivation to receive anything for their hospitable acts. There is a suggestion that the woman perceived that Elisha was a holy man of God, and we do know that Abraham showed reverence for the three men when he bowed before them.

Reacquaint yourself with these two complimentary passages, and note that between Elisha, and earlier the Divine messengers, that both eventually get around to making a declaration that in approximately one year from their visits—a son would be born to the Shunammite woman, and a son would be born to Sarah:

“Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. She said to her husband, ‘Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there.’ One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested. Then he said to Gehazi his servant, ‘Call this Shunammite.’ And when he had called her, she stood before him. He said to him, ‘Say now to her, “Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?”’ And she answered, ‘I live among my own people.’ So he said, ‘What then is to be done for her?’ And Gehazi answered, ‘Truly she has no son and her husband is old.’ He said, ‘Call her.’ When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. **Then he said, ‘At this season next year you will embrace a son.’** And she said, ‘No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant.’ The woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her” (2 Kings 4:8-17).

“Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, ‘My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.’ And they said, ‘So do, as you have said.’ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, ‘Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead *it* and make bread cakes.’ Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave *it* to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed *it* before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, ‘Where is Sarah your wife?’ And he said, ‘There, in the tent.’ **He said, ‘I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.’** And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ And the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, “Shall I indeed bear *a child*, when I am *so* old?” Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.’ Sarah denied *it* however, saying, ‘I did not laugh;’ for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh’” (Genesis 18:1-15).

While some might want to conclude that you are *only* to be hospitable to godly or holy people in order to receive the blessings of the Lord, the balance of the Holy Scriptures actually indicate that hospitality should be a common trait of all who serve Him. The Apostolic Scriptures are replete with telling us that the gift of hospitality, or simply being hospitable, is a recognizable attribute of a godly person. Consider the following statements from the Apostles, as you sort out in your mind the blessings of being hospitable:

“Let love *be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. *Be* devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, **practicing hospitality**” (Romans 12:9-13).

Love without hypocrisy practices hospitality to the saints. Additionally, according to Paul, hospitality must be an attribute of the overseers of the assembly:

“It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, **hospitable**, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the [assembly] of God?), *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil” (1 Timothy 3:1-6).

“For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but **hospitable**, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:7-9).

Peter indicates that hospitality is one sure way to exhibit love and serve one another:

“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. **Be hospitable to one another without complaint**. As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:8-10).

Paul says that godly widows express their piety by being hospitable:

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been* the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; *and* if she has brought up children, **if she has shown hospitality to strangers**, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, *and* if she has devoted herself to every good work. But refuse *to put* younger widows *on the list*, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Messiah, they want to get married, *thus* incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge” (1 Timothy 5:8-12).

Finally, it is critical to note this statement from the author of Hebrews, who points out that indiscriminate hospitality has its rewards. Unlike determining whether someone else is godly or holy, in this case simply extending hospitality to strangers just might result in hosting angels:

“Let love of the brethren continue. **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it**” (Hebrews 13:1-2).

Reviewing these passages and applying them to yourself, how would you rate your current level of hospitality? Are you only hospitable to persons who are perceived godly or holy? Are you expecting something in return for your generous hospitality? Or have you discovered the joy of giving freely expecting nothing in return? This form of hospitality epitomizes the *agapē* love of the truly born again follower of the Messiah Yeshua.

I believe that when the Lord sees an hospitable heart at work, genuinely extending hospitality to whomever a Believer encounters, I am confident that the blessings will flow. Whether such blessings are in the form of offspring as we noted in the Genesis and 2 Kings passages, or simply an attribute of an overseer or godly widow, it is obvious that our Heavenly

Father desires His people to be hospitable when appropriate. **Inevitably, blessings will come because you love the brethren!**

Until the restoration of all things...

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